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# മെട്ടോ വാർത്ത

# Metro Vaartha

WEDNESDAY, 19 MAY 2021

Kerala's first bilingual Daily

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## Nipah, Covid slayer-in-chief locked out of new Cabinet

- Omission of 'rockstar' Kerala Health Minister kicks off debate
- All sitting Ministers except CM replaced by new faces

MV CORRESPONDENT

Thiruvananthapuram

Days after leading the ruling LDF to a stupendous electoral victory, CPI (M) veteran Pinarayi Vijayan was on Tuesday elected its Parliamentary Party Leader for a second term as Chief Minister but the omission of 'rockstar' health minister KK Shailaja from the new cabinet sparked a debate.

Having won international accolades for her deft handling of the first wave of Covid-19 in Kerala after it reported India's first case in 2020, Shailaja's surprise omission drew instant comparisons with the late KR Gowri Amma and Susheela Gopalan, the firebrand Marxists who were once tipped to head the State but never did.

However, Shailaja, described as a "rockstar health minister" by section of international media, said she was not disappointed at being denied berth in the new cabinet.

"There is no need to be emotional.. I became the minister earlier because of the party's decision. I have absolute satisfaction in what I have done. I am confident that the new team can perform better than me," she said.

"Not the individual but the system is showcasing the fight against the pandemic. I am happy that I could lead the team," the leader added.

She was, however, entrusted with the position of party whip, a CPI(M) statement said here, even as the party took the position

that all members except the Chief Minister should be fresh faces in the new cabinet.

Among the fresh faces is DYFI national president PA Mohammed Riyas, who happens to be Vijayan's son-in-law.

The state committee of the Marxist party nominated 11 freshers including two women as its ministers in the new government which would be sworn-in on May 20 at the Central Stadium here in adherence to Covid-19 protocol.

Though it was almost sure that no ministers in the previous Vijayan government would find a place in his new cabinet, Shailaja was expected to be given an exemption by the party, as the state is reeling under the second wave of the pandemic. She had won the polls with the highest margin of 60,963 votes from Mattannur in Kannur. The media, during the election, had even projected her as the first woman Chief Minister of the state in future.

Social media users responded sharply to the omission of the 64-year-old leader popularly known as "Shailaja Teacher" or "Teacher Amma" among her admirers. They

pointed out that it would not be good to change the minister as Kerala was witnessing an unprecedented surge in coronavirus cases. There were many who put up her photos as their WhatsApp status, in an apparent act of extending solidarity with her.



- KK Shailaja

## Malayali's valourously leads and motivates

INDIA

മുഴുവൻ പോർക്കും മക്കൾ  
നൽകിയാൽ 10 ലക്ഷം സഹാരം

CPM, CPI go for fresh start

Party central committee member M V Govindan, former Rajya Sabha MPs P Rajeev and K N Balagopal, senior leaders K Radhakrishnan, V N Vasavan, Saji Cherian and V Sivankutty are among those inducted in Vijayan's second cabinet.

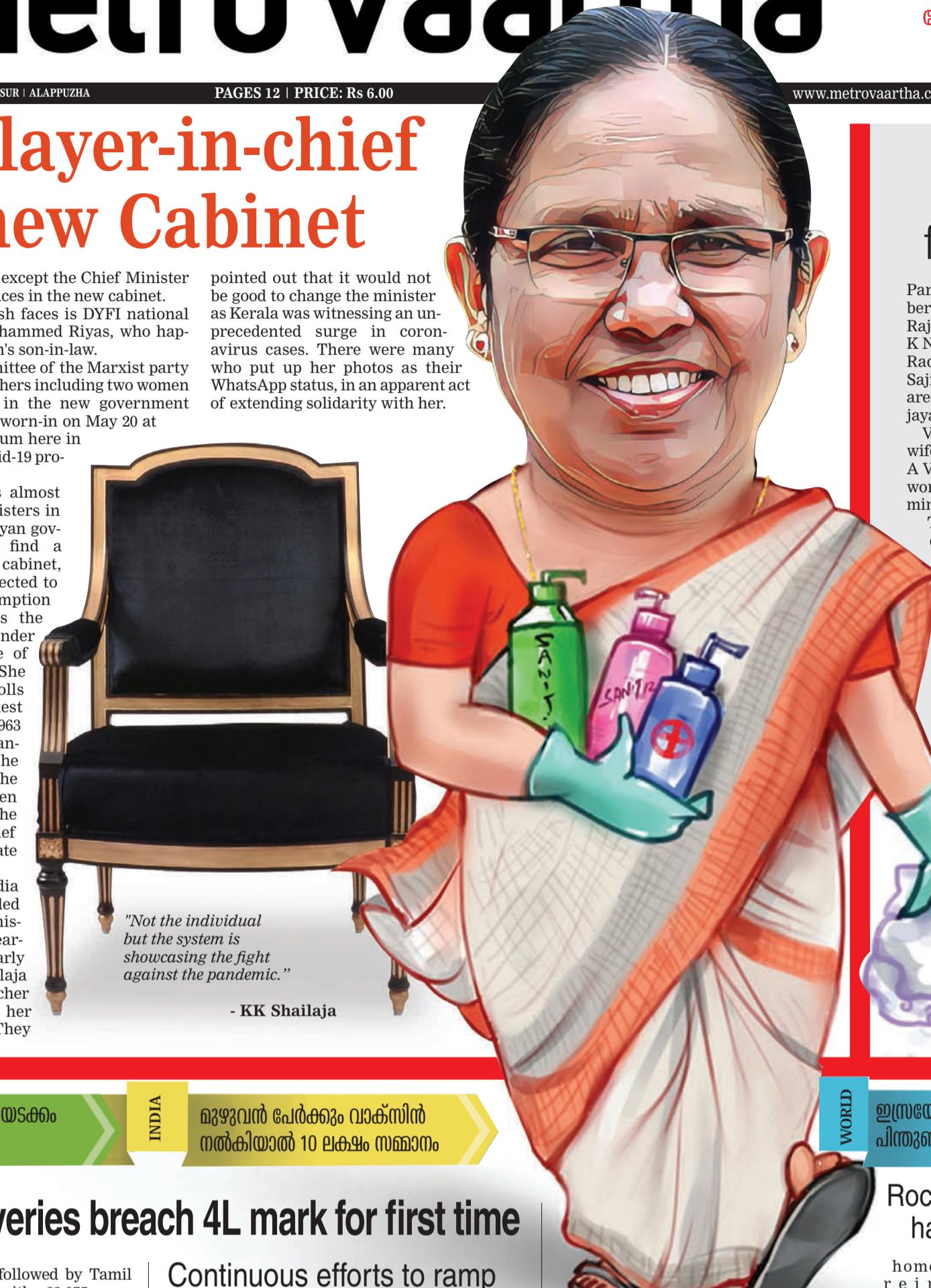
Veena George and R Bindhu, wife of CPI(M) acting secretary A Vijayaraghavan, would be the women members in the new ministry.

The state committee meeting, chaired by senior leader Elammaran Kareem, picked M B Rajesh, who wrested the Thiruthala seat from Congress's V T Balaram, as the party nominee for the post of Speaker.

Meanwhile, taking a cue from the CPI(M), ally CPI also nominated fresh faces to the cabinet.

Newly elected MLAs K Rajan, P Prasad, J Chinchu Rani and G R Anil were its pick in the coalition government.

Senior party leader and Adoor MLA Chittayam Gopalakumar has been nominated to the post of deputy speaker.



ഉന്നമേലിന  
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Rockets from Gaza rain havoc on Israeli cities

home's reinforced safe room — a routine precaution for hundreds of thousands of Israelis in the country's south.

After an explosion shook the building, they rushed outside to see cars on fire, including their own. Their home's front door had been blown off, windows were blasted and shrapnel was embedded in walls.

ILAN BEN ZION  
Jerusalem

Sirens wailed just before the Jewish holiday of Shavuot began on Sunday evening, sending Chen Farag and her family once again running for cover as they have dozens of times over the past week since the latest war between Palestinian militants in Gaza and the Israeli military erupted.

The Farags live in Ashdod, Israel's largest port on the Mediterranean coast. The city of about 225,000 people is around 30 kilometers (18 miles) north of the Gaza Strip. Six adults, two dogs and a parrot huddled in their

rocks were fired at southern Israel from the Gaza Strip. The barrages have caused deep frustration for residents, many weary over what they see as the government's failure to change the situation. Many children who have grown up in the area suffer from trauma-related issues.

Since the latest war erupted last week, Palestinian militants have fired more than 3,200 rockets at Israeli cities.

Most were intercepted or fell short, in Gaza, but hundreds made it through.

The Farag home is one of 146 buildings in Israel that were hit by rockets fired from Gaza,

according to military statistics.

They include homes, apartment blocks,

schools, kindergartens and an oil storage tank.

## Daily Covid recoveries breach 4L mark for first time

MV CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi

India has recorded more than 4 lakh daily Covid-19 recoveries in a single day for the first time, while new coronavirus infections settled below 3 lakh for the second day, the Union Health Ministry said on Tuesday. A total of 4,22,436 patients have recuperated in a span of 24 hours, taking India's cumulative recoveries to 2,15,96,512.

Average daily recovery of more than 3,55,944 cases has been recorded in the last 14 days, the Ministry said.

A total of 2,63,533 new cases were registered in a day. Ten States reported 74.54% of the new cases in a span of 24 hours. Karnataka saw the maximum casualties (1000). Karnataka follows with 476 daily deaths.

38,603, followed by Tamil Nadu with 33,075 new cases.

India's total Covid-19 active cases have decreased to 33,53,765 with net decline of 1,63,232 cases being recorded in the active case-load in a span of 24 hours. It now comprises 13.29% of the country's total cases.

Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal cumulatively account for 69.01% of India's total Active Cases.

The National Mortality Rate currently stands at 1.10%, the Ministry said.

A total of 4,329 deaths were reported in a span of 24 hours. Ten States account for 75.98% of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties (1000). Karnatka follows with 476 daily deaths.

## Continuous efforts to ramp up vaccine supply, says PM

New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday that continuous efforts are being made to ramp up Covid-19 vaccine supply in a big way, asserting that attempts are on to provide states 15-day advance schedule of the inoculation programme as it will allow them to prepare accordingly.

Interacting with state and district officials at a virtual meeting, he described them as "field commanders" in the fight against Covid-19 and said localised containment zones, aggressive testing and sharing correct and complete information with people are weapons to defeat it. The meeting was attended by district magistrates from 46 districts across nine states. People's convenience increases when information like bed availability for the sick or the vaccine availability are easily available, Modi said and also asked officials to curb black-marketing and take strict action should be taken against those who do so.

Noting that coronavirus infections are decreasing in some states and increasing in some others, he emphasised the need to be more vigilant in the face of decreasing tally and underlined that he has always stressed that the fight is about saving every single life.

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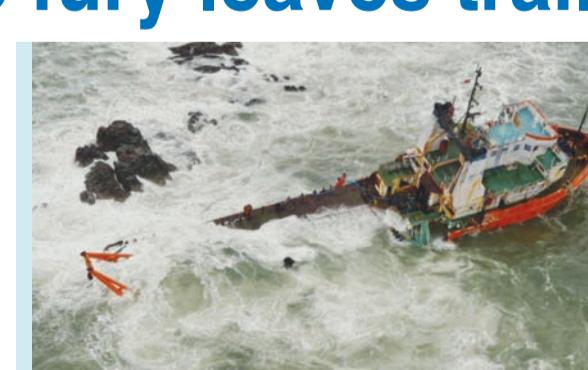
## Cyclone fury leaves trail of destruction in Gujarat; 7 dead

MV CORRESPONDENT

Ahmedabad

At least seven people were killed in Gujarat as cyclone Tauktae battered parts of the state and left behind a trail of destruction along the coast, uprooting electric poles and trees, and damaging several houses and roads. Over 16,000 houses were damaged, and more than 40,000 trees and over 1,000 poles uprooted due to the cyclonic storm, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said.

The landfall process of the eye of the extremely severe cyclonic storm Tauktae, which hit the Gujarat coast in Saurashtra region between Diu and Una, ended around midnight. It crossed the Gujarat coast as an "extremely severe cyclonic storm," and was gradually



Battling extreme weather, the Indian Navy has so far rescued 177 people on board a barge that went adrift in

the Arabian Sea near Mumbai hours before Cyclone Tauktae made landfall on the Gujarat coast. Navy ships were deployed on Monday

weakened. On Tuesday morning, it lay over the Saurashtra region near Amreli as a "severe severe cyclonic storm," and was likely to

after receipt of a request for assistance for barge 'P305' adrift off Heera oil fields in Bombay high area with 273 personnel on board. The oil fields are around 70 km southwest of Mumbai.

Sixty persons on board the barge were rescued till 11 pm and the remaining overnight, the official said, adding a Navy helicopter brought three rescues to INS Shikra this morning. INS Shikra, formerly known

gusting to 125 kmph, as the cyclone lay 15 km east-northeast of Amreli, around 125 km south-southwest of Surendranagar, and 205 km southwest

of Ahmedabad.

Chief Minister Rupani told reporters in Gandhinagar that 16,500 houses, mostly thatched ones, were damaged, and more than 40,000 trees and 1,081 poles, mainly of electric supply, were uprooted due to the cyclone. Also, 159 roads were damaged and 196 blocked due to

different reasons, he said, adding that 45 of them were so far cleared for traffic movement. There was power outage in 2,437 villages and the supply has been restored in 484 villages till now, he said.

Rupani said the state government's major concern was uninterrupted treatment of COVID-19 patients in around 1,400 hospitals across the state. Out of these facilities, 16 faced power outage due to the cyclone. The electric supply was restored in 12 of them, while the remaining four were operating on backup power generators, he said. The production of medical oxygen at a plant in Bhavnagar was disrupted due to the cyclonic storm, but the supply continued from the buffer stock, he informed.

## Cyclone: Navy rescues 177 from barge

INS Kunjali, a naval air station located at Colaba in south Mumbai.

State-run Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) had on Monday said barge P305 with 261 personnel deployed for offshore drilling got de-anchored and began drifting because of the cyclonic storm Tauktae.

P305 being an accommodation barge had no engine to power it, and it hit an oil rig in the vicinity and there was ingress

of water, sources said. A barge is a long flat-bottomed boat either under its power or towed by another. An accommodation barge is of shallow draft (vessel whose keel is not far below the waterline) and is used to accommodate personnel on projects where shore accommodation is not available.

Offshore accommodation barges are fully autonomous and used mainly in the oil and gas industries.

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# Report says Myanmar internet a 'virtual battlefield'

ELAINE KURTENBACHAP

Bangkok

Myanmar's military rulers are seeking to limit access to the internet to an internal network of only "whitelisted" sites to quash opposition to their seizure of power, according to a report by the International Crisis Group.

It likened the internet to a "virtual battlefield" where the military is struggling to gain an edge because it lacks technological capacity, while social media companies like Facebook have banned military officials and many government agencies.

The report released Tuesday noted a narrowing of the leeway for online dissent and abuses of social media to spread hatred toward minority Muslim people in western Myanmar's Rakhine under Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government, which was ousted in a Feb. 1 coup. Since then, authorities have imposed nightly internet outages and sought to limit access to social media platforms.

International telecoms companies such as Norway's Telenor and other businesses have protested the moves, which they say

are crippling business activity and have undone years of progress toward integrating Myanmar into the world economy.

The coup interrupted a faltering, decade-long move toward a civilian, democratically elected government after decades of military rule that began soon after the country, also known as Burma, gained independence from Britain.

It incensed a generation of young Myanmar people who grew up in relative freedom, with access to cell phones, social media and the internet as the country leapfrogged into the mobile age, with heavy reliance on internet services commonly found in wealthier countries.

The junta has ordered mobile operators and internet service providers to restrict access to certain websites and virtual private networks, or VPNs, that can skirt in-



ternet filtering. It is gradually ramping up shutdowns, limiting access to only fiber data connections which are available to only a fraction of the population.

Many tech-savvy young people are involved in the civil disobedience movement against the coup and the military lacks the sort of capabilities that China has devel-

oped over the past several decades, enabling it to police the internet and ban access to certain sites, the International Crisis Group report says.

So instead the military, also known as the Tatmadaw, is developing an "intranet" for inside the country that allows mobile access only to approved, or "whitelisted" applications, it says. Those might include online banking, for example.

That "inevitably limits its ability to offer anything more than the most basic services, with a major impact on the economy," the report says.

Last week, Telenor, which is the only Western mobile carrier in Myanmar, issued a statement objecting to such trends.

"Myanmar's superior connectivity was built on the combined experience of almost all other countries: Open internet access fuels growth. Whitelisting is a

practice that will not give the same benefits – and should be abandoned," Telenor said.

It noted an estimate by KPMG that the expansion of access to mobile and internet communications had boosted Myanmar's economic growth by more than 5%.

Telenor recently announced it was writing off the value of its business in Myanmar, worth about \$780 million. But it said it did not plan to withdraw and was still adding subscribers.

Myanmar authorities appear to be finalizing details of a draft cybersecurity law that foreign businesses and other groups contend would increase risks of doing business there.

The International Crisis Group's report urged companies and governments to ensure they are not abetting the military's efforts to control the internet and suppress opposition.

Governments should meanwhile step up arms embargoes to prevent supplying dual civilian-military use of technologies that can be used to suppress political dissent, it said.

## Over 1000 kids, parents reach out to govt helpline for tackling Covid woes

New Delhi

From facing loneliness in Covid-19 isolation ward to exhibiting aggressive behaviour after parents contracted the virus, over 1,000 children and parents have reached out to government helpline seeking help.

With an objective of providing psychological first-aid and emotional support to children affected during the pandemic, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPNR) is providing tele-counselling to children through SAMVEDNA (Sensitising Action on Mental Health Vulnerability through Emotional Development and Necessary Acceptance) - a toll-free helpline launched to provide psycho-social mental support for affected children.

According to Women and Child Development Ministry officials, redressal of 1,009 complaints have been done between September, 2020 to May 7, 2021.

In a case from a Covid-19 isolation centre in Aurangabad, a 15-year-old child expressed frustration over not getting enough love from parents due to more number of siblings and called up to talk about her parents' pressure of getting her married off early.

The counsellor spoke to



the child and her parents and suggested to encourage her to focus on academics.

In another case, parent of a

engaging in activities he is interested in and making a regular routine to get away from boredom.

This tele-counselling service is available on a toll-free number 1800-121-

2830 from Monday to Saturday from 10 am to 1 pm and 3 pm to 8 pm and is exclusively for children who are willing to talk and are in need of counselling.

When a child/care-taker/parent dial 1800-121-2830, they get to speak to a professional counsellor in a safe environment. Tele-counselling is provided to children under three categories: children who are in quarantine/isolation/Covid care centres, children who have Covid positive parents or family members, and children who have lost their parents due to the pandemic.

This service caters to children from all over India in various regional languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Oriya, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, the Women and Child Development Ministry said.

A 17-year-old boy from Madhya Pradesh's Singrauli isolation centre called up and talked about being scared of loneliness. The counsellor advised him to spend time

PTI

six-year-old child in Kanpur called to discuss the aggressive behaviour of their child who was lodged in an isolation centre after contracting the virus.

The counsellor suggested that the child engage in different activities like narrating stories or playing with toys. It was found that as the parents were keeping to themselves after the family tested positive, the child was feeling lonely and exhibiting aggressive behaviour.

This service was launched in September, 2020 and aims to support children in the difficult times of Covid-19 pandemic.

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## SC judge B R Gavai recuses himself from hearing Param Bir Singh's plea

New Delhi

Supreme Court judge Justice B R Gavai on Tuesday recused himself from hearing a plea filed by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh seeking transfer of all inquiries against him to an independent agency outside Maharashtra.

The matter came up for hearing before a vacation bench of Justices Vineet Saran and Gavai.

"Brother (Justice Gavai) has some difficulty in taking up this matter. We will just say place it before another bench," Justice Saran said at the outset.

"I can't hear this matter," Justice Gavai said.

"List before another bench in which one of us is not a party," the bench said.

Senior advocate Puneet Bali, appearing for Singh, said the inquiries against the former top cop is a "complete witch-hunt" and are in "complete transgression" of the orders passed by the apex court as

well as the Bombay High Court.

Singh, a 1988-batch IPS officer, was removed from the post of Mumbai Police Commissioner on March 17 and was made the General Commander of Maharashtra State Home Guard after he levelled allegations of corruption and misconduct against them Home Minister and senior NCP leader Anil Deshmukh.

The Bombay High Court had ordered a CBI probe into allegations of Singh against Deshmukh who had to resign as parties.

Singh, in his earlier plea filed before the top court, had sought a CBI probe against Deshmukh who, he claimed, had asked police officers, including suspended cop Sachin Waze, to extort Rs 100 crore from bars and restaurants.

The top court had then asked him to go the Bombay High Court which ordered CBI probe into Singh's allegations and against

ent agency like the CBI.

Singh has been facing inquiries, including the one under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities)

Act in a case of 2015 and he has termed this as a witch-hunt by the state agency.

The former top cop of Mumbai, in his fresh plea, has made the state government, CBI and the Maharashtra Police chief as parties.

Singh, in his earlier plea filed before the top court, had sought a CBI probe against Deshmukh who, he claimed, had asked police officers, including suspended cop Sachin Waze, to extort Rs 100 crore from bars and restaurants.

The top court had then asked him to go the Bombay High Court which ordered CBI probe into Singh's allegations and against

that order, the state government and the NCP leader subsequently failed to get any relief from the apex court.

Deshmukh denied any wrongdoing and had said there was not an iota of substantive evidence to even prima facie establish that any of the allegations made by Singh had an element of truth.

In its 52-page judgement passed earlier, the high court had said Singh's allegations against Deshmukh had put at stake the citizen's faith in the state police.

Such allegations, made by a serving police officer, against the state home minister could not be left unattended, and were required to be probed into, if prima facie, they made a case of a cognisable offence, the high court had said.

The high court's verdict had come on three PILs including one filed by Singh seeking several reliefs as also a CBI probe into the matter. PTI

## COAI urges govt to remove fake messages on social media linking Covid-19 to 5G

New Delhi

Telecom industry body COAI has approached the information technology ministry for removal of fake and misleading messages from social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter linking spread of Covid-19 to 5G technology.

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), whose members include Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, said the claims linking 5G with coronavirus are baseless as 5G networks have not yet been installed in the country and even 5G trials are yet to be started by the telecom operators.

In a letter dated May 15 to MeitY Additional Secretary Rajendra Kumar, COAI Director General S P Kochhar said: "To safeguard the national interest, we request your good office to kindly instruct all the social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc., to remove all such posts and misleading campaigns from their platforms on an urgent basis." Peo-

ple have been sharing audio and video messages on social media platforms in which 5G towers are being blamed for rise in casualties across the country even though none of the companies have installed 5G technology anywhere in India.

Video messages show that people convinced with the claim want to bring down mobile towers.

"We would hereby like to highlight that these types of rumours have spread over the past two weeks, mainly in semi-urban and rural areas.

"There has been a rise in such misinformation mainly in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab. We are concerned that this misleading and false claim / information might spread to other parts of the country as well," Kochhar said.

The Department of Telecommunications has also denied the claim of linking the Covid-19 pandemic to the 5G technology as false, and said it has no scientific basis.

"Moreover, it is informed that the testing of the 5G network has not yet started anywhere in India. Hence, the claim that 5G trials or networks are causing coronavirus in India is baseless and false," the DoT had said.

International bodies like the World Health Organization and International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection have also rejected claims of 5G having any ill effect on the health of people.

COAI said spreading myth around telecom services is against the national interest and may significantly impact the telecom operations.

The impact on the connectivity will deprive the public or government authorities from getting uninterrupted telecom services at this crucial juncture when telecom and internet is essential for enabling work from home and various initiatives of the government including the vaccination, it said.

PTI

# Russia's northernmost base projects its power across Arctic

NAGURSKOYE (RUSSIA)

During the Cold War, Russia's Nagurskoye airbase was little more than a runway, a weather station and a communications outpost in the Franz Josef Land archipelago.

It was a remote and desolate home mostly for polar bears, where temperatures plunge in winter to minus 42 Celsius (43 degrees below zero Fahrenheit) and the snow only disappears from August to mid-September.

Now, Russia's northernmost military base is bristling with missiles and radar and its extended runway can handle all types of aircraft, including nuclear-capable strategic bombers, projecting Moscow's power and influence across the Arctic amid intensifying international competition for the region's vast resources.

The shamrock-shaped facility — three large pods extending from a central atrium — is called the "Arctic Trefoil" and is painted in the white-red-and-blue of the national flag, brightening the otherwise stark vantage point on the 5,600-kilometer (3,470-mile) Northern Sea Route along Russia's Arctic coast.

Other buildings on the island, which is called Alexandra Land, are used for radar and communications, a weather station, oil storage, hangars and construction facilities.

Russia has sought to assert its influence over wide areas of the Arctic

in competition with the United States, Canada, Denmark and Norway as shrinking polar ice from the warming planet offers new opportunities for resources and shipping routes. China also has shown an increasing interest in the region, believed to hold up to one-fourth of the Earth's undiscovered oil and gas.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has cited estimates that put the value of Arctic mineral riches at USD 30 trillion.

Tensions between Russia and the West will likely loom large over Thursday's meeting of the Arctic nations' foreign ministers in Reykjavik, Iceland, where Moscow is set to take a rotating chairmanship in the Arctic Council.

The base, which sits about 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) south of the geographic North Pole, was built using new construction technologies as part of Kremlin efforts to bolster the military amid spiraling tensions with the West following Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

The following year, Russia submitted a revised bid for vast territories in the Arctic to the United Nations, claiming 1.2 million square kilometers (over 463,000 square miles) of Arctic sea shelf, extending more than 350 nautical miles (650 kilometers) from shore.

While the U.N. pondered that claim and those from other nations, Russia has said it sees the North-



ern Sea Route as its "historically developed national transport corridor," requiring authorization from Moscow for foreign vessels to navigate along it.

The U.S. has dismissed Russia's claims of jurisdiction on parts of the route as illegitimate.

Moscow has declared its intention to introduce procedures for foreign ships and assign Russian pilots for guidance along the route, which runs from Norway to Alaska.

As part of that effort, Russia has rebuilt and expanded facilities across the polar region, deploying surveillance and defensive assets.

A base in the similar trefoil shape and patriotic colors to the one in Nagurskoye is on Kotelnaya Island, between the Laptev Sea and the East Siberian Sea on eastern

North, has also triggered the need for more NATO presence, and we have increased our presence there with more naval capabilities, presence in the air, and not least, the importance of protecting transatlantic undersea cables transmitting a lot of data," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

Moiseyev fretted about the U.S. military assets in Norway, saying it has led to an "increase of the conflict potential in the Arctic." The Russian Foreign Ministry last week fumed at a U.S. nuclear submarine calling at a Norwegian port, saying it reflected what it described as "Oslo's course for the militarization of the Arctic." On the sidelines of this week's Arctic Council meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is set to hold talks with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken -- an encounter intended to lay the groundwork for Putin's meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden planned for next month.

Blinken has pointed out that with the Arctic warming at twice the rate of the rest of the global average, Russia has moved to increase its presence in the region.

"Russia is exploiting this change to try to exert control over new spaces," he said last month. "It is modernizing its bases in the Arctic and building new ones." Since Putin visited the Nagurskoye base in 2017, it has been strengthened and expanded.

It now houses a dedicated tactical group that operates electronic surveillance, air defense assets and a battery of Bastion anti-ship missile systems.

A runway has been extended to accommodate all types of aircraft, including Tu-95 nuclear-capable strategic bombers, said Maj.-Gen. Igor Churkin, who oversees air force operations at the base.

"The modernisation of Arctic airfields significantly increases the potential of the Northern Fleet's aviation to control the airspace in the area of the Northern Sea Route and allows to ensure its security," he said.

In March, the Russian military conducted drills at Nagurskoye with ground troops and a pair of MiG-31 fighters flying over the

## Fortune magazine names city doctor one of world's 50 top leaders

SPL CORRESPONDENT

Mumbai

When urogynaecologist Dr Aparna Hegde was a resident doctor at a Mumbai government hospital, she had witnessed too many morbid scenarios at the time of delivering babies. Sometimes, these tragedies could have been prevented but mortality persisted due to a lack of resources. This became a motivation for her to start ARMMAN in 2008. The maternal and child NGO is focused on improving health through the use of low-cost technology—like reaching pregnant women and new mothers with information through their cell phones, especially in rural areas, via programs like 'm'Mitra' and 'Kilkari'.

That effort to give back has also recently placed her among Fortune magazine's World's 50 Greatest Leaders. The list includes names such as New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, US voting rights activist and politician Stacey Abrams, and Serum Institute of India head Adar Poonawalla. Hegde had no idea that she was going to make it to the top 20 (her rank is 15). "I knew I was among the finalists. My team in-



formed me," she says, adding that she feels surprised and humbled because her work has been recognised on an international platform.

"You need to work harder as people are putting faith in you. This honour means that there will be more impetus for our work at ARMMAN. So, we need to be focused that more work is done for the woman and children on ground," she says.

ARMMAN, which means 'wish' in Hindi, is also an acronym for 'advancing reduction in mortality and morbidity of mothers, children, and neonates'.

The Stanford University alumna, who also did a fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, says, "Very early on, during my residency, I realized that if you want to impact lives you need to go into the community. It can't just be restricted to the hospital." Even after treatment, Hegde saw that mothers and children had to return to their homes and areas which had deplorable conditions. "So, I thought if I want to impact lives that I have to ensure that the risk factors are detected early in mothers and children. This helps the primary healthcare system in return and there's also a proper referral system." She adds that a system like this avoids overcrowding at hospitals in the last minute. When mobile phones came to India, Hegde realized they could be a great tool to reach out to women directly – inform them about dos and don'ts during pregnancy or reach health workers.

# 63 flights hit as city airport remains shut for 11 hours

STAFF REPORTER

Mumbai

Cyclone Tauktae forced the Mumbai airport to suspend flights for 11 hours between 11 am and 10 pm on Monday, leaving hundreds stranded. Airlines canceled 56 flights and seven arrivals were diverted to safer airports on Monday.

Passengers scheduled to fly on Tuesday were advised to check their flight status before leaving for the airport.

A large majority of the 200 flights the city airport is now handling in 24 hours were disrupted. What tested the nerves of passengers and flight crew was the staggered shutdown. Initially, the airport announced it would stay shut



from 11 am to 2 pm. The closure was extended to 4 pm, then to 6 pm, and again to 8 pm, and finally to 10 pm. By 10:30 pm, airlines had canceled 22 departures and 34 arrivals, said an airport spokesperson.

In an incident, a panel from the underside of an aerobridge crashed into a ground ambulance. It didn't injure anyone, said the official.

An Air India spokesperson said the airline operated 12

flights to and from Mumbai till 11 am. "We operated the maximum number of flights till the notice on flight suspension came into effect," said the spokesperson.

The weather forecast issued on Sunday had predicted a calm day with patchy rains over the city. But Monday was a different story. Around 8:15 am, a SpiceJet flight from Chennai was forced to divert to Surat as the sky over Mumbai stayed overcast at 8,000 feet with cumulonimbus clouds, according to the aviation weather update forecast. An IndiGo flight from Kolkata was diverted to Hyderabad and another from Lucknow returned.

## BJP TO PROTEST DEMANDING MARATHA JOB, EDUCATION QUOTAS: DANVE

STAFF REPORTER

Mumbai

The Union Minister of State and BJP MP Dadasahab Danve on Monday said that the Maha Vikas Aghadi government has lost ground in the legal battle for job and education reservation for Marathas. Every BJP activist will join the agitation of the Maratha community to get reservation, putting aside the identity of the party. In a press statement, Danve said that reservation is an issue for the development of the Maratha community and the future of the community's youth.

The BJP is determined to continue the fight till the reservation issue is resolved, said Danve. It was revealed after reading the verdict of the Supreme Court that the MVA government has cheated the Maratha community as it did not want to give them job reservation, he said. The government of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray needs to wake up to stop this fraud and bring justice to the community. He said that the BJP will be actively involved in the statewide agitation for this. He has also blamed the MVA government for setting up a new commission after the expiration of the term of the backward classes commission in the state, which shows the negative attitude of the government in the matter.

## IT company official booked for violating Covid protocol

SPL CORRESPONDENT

Mumbai

A senior official of a Bengaluru-based software company with offices in Mumbai has been booked along with his three friends, including two women, for allegedly violating the pandemic orders enforced during the lockdown in the state till June 1.

The incident occurred on May 10 at around 8 pm when sub-inspector Shantanu Naik-Nimbalkar, attached to the Marine Drive police station on nakabandi duty at Mafatlal Junction on NS Road, stopped a Skoda car. However, the motorist (a solutions manager and lead - finance and risk, banking & insurance) sped away after saying 'I am going, do whatever you want to do,' his complaint said. The officer then called the person to come to the police station but he claimed that he has stepped out in his car to fill the fuel tank and repeated the same line 'Do whatever you want.'

The case was registered on May 11 based on a complaint filed by Naik-Nimbalkar against the motorists who were called to the police station but declined to do so although he was informed that a case has been registered against him and his friends who were spotted in the car violating the lockdown orders. "We have filed a case against the motorist and three others for the lockdown violation. At present

no arrest is done in the violation cases filed. Summons will be issued after the lockdown and action will be initiated against all the violators," said Marine Drive police senior inspector Vishwanath Kolekar.

Naik-Nimbalkar along with a few other personnel was deputed on nakabandi duty when they stopped the motorist. "The motorist replied vaguely and showed the vehicle details that were stored in his mobile locker in which his name and identity were noticed. When asked to park the vehicle aside the motorists sped away after saying 'I am going, do whatever you want to do,' his complaint said. The officer then called the person to come to the police station but he claimed that he has stepped out in his car to fill the fuel tank and repeated the same line 'Do whatever you want.'

The four have been booked under the Indian Penal Code sections 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (negligent act), 279 (rash driving) and under the MV Act sections. If found guilty, the four can be sent to jail for five months.

## CYCLONE TAUKTAE

### Erratic power supply, outages hit city after cyclone

SPL CORRESPONDENT

Mumbai

Power fluctuations and outages were reported from several parts of Mumbai and its metropolitan region including Navi Mumbai, Thane, Vasai-Virar, and Panvel. There were a flurry of complaints posted on social media tagging power distributing companies of BEST Undertaking, Tata Power, Adani Electricity, and MSEDCCL; but automated responses are what the complainants got in return.

In many areas across the city and suburbs consumers complained of power outages that ranged from a few minutes to even 5-6 hours. These areas included Dadar, Tardeo, Kurla, Ghatkopar, Malad, Borivali, Chembur, Versova, Andheri, Kandivali, Sion, Tilak Nagar, and many other localities whose consumers belonged to the above power distributors.

In south Mumbai, where BEST undertaking supplies, they received more than 60 complaints of power outage and meter boxes affecting the supply due to waterlogging.



The BEST officials said that these are being addressed with the limited staff owing to Covid-19. The BEST supplies to 10.50 lakh consumers between Colaba and Sion/Mahim.

Likewise, the suburbs were also affected by power outages. Tata Power received several complaints on their social media handles that 'there has been no electricity for 5 hours. What's the issue? Why is it taking so long?'. When asked about the status of the number of power outage complaints arising out of cyclone Tauktae, TPC didn't respond.

In the western suburbs, the 27 lakh Adani electricity Mumbai Limited too faced problems. The power distributor did not mention the number of complaints of power

outages, despite many taking social media to get in touch with them. An AEML spokesperson said, "To ensure the continuity of power supply and mitigate any disruptions owing to the cyclone and heavy rain, AEML took all necessary precautions. Our specialized Quick Response Teams were on standby and ensured, wherever there were power disruption complaints, the supply was restored with the minimum interruption."

The MMR too was heavily affected. Sources in MSEDCCL said that due to the cyclone, 6,73 lakh consumers faced power outages throughout the day. "Our engineers and staff worked hard and ensured that by 2 pm, power supply of around 4.14 lakh consumers was restored," said a spokesperson from MSEDCCL. Due to the heavy rains, feeder systems had tripped, supply was affected after a tree collapsed on the cables and junction boxes and they even disconnected supply as a precautionary measure in areas where there was waterlogging.



### Four lives lost as trail of massive damage left in coastal districts

STAFF REPORTER

Mumbai

tricity Board have been uprooted by the strong winds.

Meanwhile, the IMD has said that for the next two days the sea will be rough and the wind speed will be 65-85 kilometers per hour. During this period, the fishermen have been advised not to venture into the sea. AIR correspondent reports that more than 13,000 employees of MSEB have been tirelessly working to restore the power supply caused by the cyclonic storm. Although around 138 sub-stations of MSEB were affected, 78 sub-stations have resumed operations. In Palghar too, more than 1.98 lakh people were affected by the snapping of power lines. However, at some places, power has been restored by the MSEB.

According to Raigad district collector Nidhi Chaudhary, four people were killed and six injured in the district. More than 5,000 houses in the district have been partially damaged and around 550 electric poles of the Maharashtra State Elec-

Decline in daily Covid-19 cases in 17 districts

STAFF REPORTER

Mumbai

In Maharashtra, there has been a decline in the daily number of new Covid-19 cases. The member of the Maharashtra Covid-19 taskforce, Dr Pradip Awate, said that between April 9 and 15, as many as 58,000 new cases were found daily in the state. This came down to about 44,000 last week. Out of the 35 districts, a decline in the daily caseload is witnessed in 17 districts.

The Nanded district in Marathwada tops the list as there is 81 per cent drop in new cases, followed by Mumbai at 77 per cent, Thane 71 per cent, Pune 23.47 per cent, Nashik 30.47 per cent and Nagpur with 58.54 per cent decline. Apart from this, there has been respite from Covid in the districts of Bhandara, Nandurbar, Latur, Raigad, Jalna, Hingoli and Gondiya.

However, 18 districts including Kolhapur, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Amravati, and Satara are yet to report a decline in the daily cases.

## 6 held over youth's murder following water dispute

STAFF REPORTER

Mumbai

The Mira Bhayander Vasai Virar (MBVV) police on Sunday arrested six persons on the charges of stabbing to death the 22-year-old Imran Iqbal Idris in Bilal Pada of Nallasopara in a dispute over the filling of water from a common tap in the locality, the police said on Monday.

According to officials of the Tulinji police station, there have been frequent quarrels among the residents of Bilalpada over the filling of water and complaints and cross complaints had been registered and the police have also taken preventive measures.

However, in one such quarrel at the common water tap a group of persons stabbed Imran and others. Imran died on the spot and two others were injured. The two who received stab wounds have been admitted to the hospital.

## Lt Col held over army recruitment exam question leak

SPL CORRESPONDENT

Mumbai

The Pune police crime branch arrested on Monday a serving lieutenant colonel in connection with the leak of question papers for an all-India Army entrance exam. The exam was to be held on February 28 but had to be cancelled. "We have arrested a Lt Col-rank officer in the paper leak case but I won't comment any further on the matter for now," Pune police commissioner Amitabh Gupta said.

An Army officer from Delhi, said, "The lieutenant colonel was the presiding officer of the panel that was in charge of the question paper printing at the Army Recruitment Office (ARO) in Secunderabad. According to the procedure, the ARO is required to form separate panels, comprising officers from Army units in the military area where the ARO is located, for printing and distribution question papers. The Lt Col was not with the ARO but was from one of the Army units in Secunderabad." He said, "An internal Army inquiry has prima facie established his link with the alleged leak."

Two Army majors are among the 10 suspects arrested earlier. A police officer associated with the investigation said the arrested Lt Col was being brought to Pune in connection with the registered by the Wanowrie police.

## Jumbo Covid centre damaged at Dahisar

SPL CORRESPONDENT

Mumbai

The temporary structures set up by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) at Mulund and BKC managed to withstand the gusty winds brought in by cyclone Tauktae on Monday, but the Dahisar Covid-19 centre suffered damage, which would take the civic body at least two days to repair. However, the BMC had already shifted all the patients from these centres to NESCO and Seven Hills units on Saturday and Sunday.

About 243 patients were shifted from the BKC centre, 183 from Dahisar and 154 from



the Mulund jumbo centre. Mulund also has a permanent structure, where 22 ICU patients are undergoing treatment. Apart from the damage that the Dahisar centre faced, it also suffered water leakage issues. "The jumbo centre at Dahisar checknaka suffered damage. Though it is not severe, it will take at least two to three days to repair the structure and no patients can be admitted during the period," said an official from the centre.

Dr Deepa Shriyan, head of the Dahisar Covid-19 centre said, "The centre suffered minimal damage. No water has en-

## Three killed, 337 houses in Palghar district destroyed

STAFF REPORTER

Mumbai

been damaged, he said. The wind damaged 34 electrical poles, most of them in the Talasari taluka. Two boats also were damaged, he said.

There have been two deaths in the district, both in the Vasai taluka. From the Vasai taluka, 57 families were evacuated during the cyclone, he said. A Superintending Engineer of the MSEDCCL said that of the total 38 substations in the district, nine were damaged.









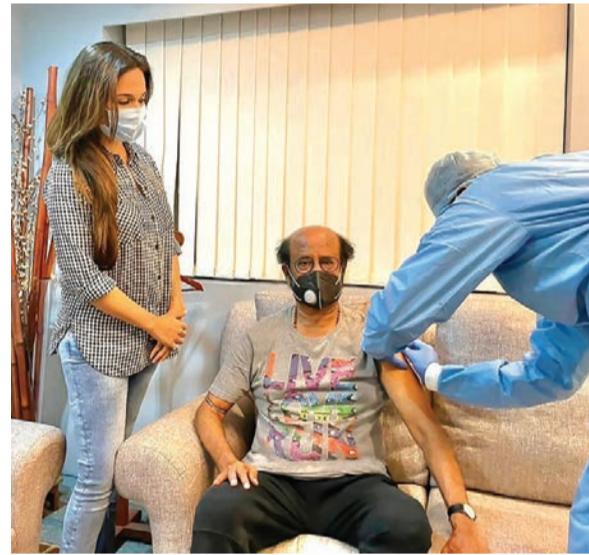




# Entertainment



## അപ്പുർവ അനുഭവം പക്ഷഗവച്ച് സെലിന ജൈയ്റ്ററ്റലി



## വാക്സിൻ എടുത്ത രജിസ്റ്റികാറ്റ്

**(၁)** မိန္ဒကတေသနရဲ့ ဆေးဖူးမာရ် အဲကိုကာကွယ် စေခဲ့ပါ။  
သာက်ပါး၊ ဧရာဝတီ၊ ကျောက်သာရေး၊ ဇာတ်ကာကွယ် စေခဲ့ပါ။  
သာက်ပါး၊ ဧရာဝတီ ကျော် မာရွှေ့ စားအကြောင်း ပေါ်လျှော့  
ခဲ့တော်းတွေ၏ အောက်ပါး ဧရာဝတီကျောက်တွေရဲ့ မောင်းတွေ  
ထွေးထွေး ပေးအပ်ပါ။ ကမ္ဘား၊ တရားလေ ပေးအပ်ပါ။  
ဧရာဝတီသာသေး၊ ဆေးဖူး၊ ဧရာဝတီကျောက် စေခဲ့ပါ။ သော  
ကျောက်တွေ ပေးအပ်ပါ။ ဧရာဝတီကျောက် အောက်ပါး ဧရာဝတီ  
ကျောက်တွေ ပေးအပ်ပါ။ ဧရာဝတီကျောက် အောက်ပါး ဧရာဝတီ  
ကျောက်တွေ ပေးအပ်ပါ။



## മഹാക്കണ്ഠ ഭിന്നശ്രൂതായി സൗരി

வீர வோஸ் தமிழ் ஸிஸஸ் 3 மூலம் ராவு கா  
 யக்காகுபுர் 'வேலாங்' என ஸினிமயை பட புதிய  
 போஸ்ட் பூர்த்திரின்ன. வாயத்தை கெவிள் அள்ள் சிறுத்  
 ஸாவியாக செல்லுமாற். தமிழ் ஹாஸ் தாரம் ஸுனி மஹேந்திரன்  
 யூட் கடுத்த அருடாயக்காய மழுகை ஸினேஸ் என கம்பாபா  
 திருத்த அவதரிப்பிக்குனு ஏற்றான்தான் ஹு சிறுத்தி  
 வெறுத்த வளிய பிரதேசத் தொகை ஆக்ஷிங் பூ  
 ரத்தியாகி ஹபேஸ் போஸ்ட் பொய்யைக்கணிலுள். ஸ்கெக்கம்  
 ர் பிலின்ஸிர்ஜ் வொனித் கலைமகன் முவாக் கிர்ஹ்நிகை  
 ன சிறுத்தித் கோயவுதூயில் தினுங்கு மழுகை அருடாயக  
 காயான் ஸுநி ஏற்றுமாற். பலே, தனி ராமண், ஹரிஸ் பேரடி,  
 ஶி ரத்தினி, ஸுஜாத தூக்கும் ரிரவை தாரங்கள் சிறு  
 திலுத்துத் தீவிரக்கியான் கால்கையாத்துக்கார். தெல்லை  
 யாற் பிரதிஸாவி என கம்பாபாத்துமாயான் பலே அவுதலில்பி  
 கூறுமாற். பாலகாஷுகாரதாய 'அரைநக்கூடுகளை' தனி ராமண்  
 யூங் அருட்கெவி என்னுத்து அதை ஹரிஸ் பேரடியூங் ஏற்று  
 னு. சிறுத்திர்ஜ் மத் கூரக்குற்ற போஸ்டுகள் பூர்த்திரின்ன  
 யிலைஸ்ஸேபி ஸுநி அள்ள் ஸாரிதா. சாதாரணமென்ற ஸோ  
 பி ஜாரிசீவரம். ஏவிரிங் கெ ஶரத்குமாற், கலாஸாவியா  
 ன டி வொலஸுபுவமண்ணு, ஸாலாடுகாம் மஹேஷ் மாதை, ஸுதர  
 ஸாவியாக தினேச் ஏனிவரான்.



# മകൾ ജനിച്ച സന്തോഷം പകിടവച്ച് സിങ്ഗ് വിത്സൻ

**യു** വടക്കാരിൽ ശ്രദ്ധേയനായ നടക്കാൻ സിജു വിത്സൻ. തന്റെ ക്ഷേമം അവും ശുദ്ധി വിജയമുന്നോളും ഒരു മകൾ ജനിച്ച സാന്നിദ്ധ്യം പ്രകടപ്പെട്ടിരുന്നതാണ് താഴെമെച്ചപ്പെട്ട്. കഴിഞ്ഞ ദിവസമാണ് സിജുവിനും ശ്രൂതിയ്ക്കും ഒരു മകൾ പീറന്നത്. ഭാര്യയുടെ പുത്രാളി പ്രിയാ പശ്ചാദ്വാ കൊണ്ടാണ് കഴിഞ്ഞ ദിവസം മകൾ ജനിച്ച സാന്നിദ്ധ്യം സിജു ദേശാദ്ധ്യത്വ ദിഡിയിൽ പ്രകടപ്പെട്ടിരുന്നത്. മുംഗാമൈയിൽ വച്ചാണ് ഭാര്യ ശ്രൂതി വിജയൻ മകൾക്ക് ജനം നൽകിയത്.

അതേസമയം, വിന്യസൻ ഒരുക്കുന്ന പത്രത്താവളം നൃറാണ് ആ  
ണ് സിജു വിത്സർദ്ദീതായി ഒരുജ്ഞുന്ന ഏറ്റവും പുതിയ ചിത്രം. ആറാ  
ഴ്വപുഡി വേലായുധ പണികൾ എന്ന ചർത്തെ കമാപാത്രത്തയാണ്  
സിജു വിത്സൻ അവൻറിക്കുന്നത്.

କାରୀଙ୍କ ପ୍ରକାଶନ କମିଶନ୍ ପରିଷଦ୍ ଯେଉଁଠାରେ ଆମରିତରାଜ୍ ପ୍ରକାଶନ କରାଯାଇଛନ୍ତି।

A collage of three images. The main image shows two men sitting in purple theater seats; the man on the left has a beard and is wearing a black shirt, while the man on the right is wearing glasses and a blue shirt. An inset image in the top left corner shows a close-up of a person's hands and a dark blue button-down shirt.



## സണ്ടേശവുമായി ടുക്കിക ചൗള

**കേം** പരിശ്വരത്ത് നായകനായ ഫേണാ എന്ന ചിത്രത്തിലും മലയാളികൾക്കും ഏറെ പരിചിതയായ നടരാജൻ ഭൂമിക ചൗളം. ഇപ്പോഴിതാ താരം ഇല്ല ഒരു സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ എല്ലാവും ദ്രോക്കേടുകയിൽ നിൽക്കേണ്ടി എന്ന സന്ദേശമുണ്ടായി എന്നതായത്.

ചെയ്യും. മഹാരാജക്ക് എത്രത്തുകില്ലും ചെയ്തു കൊടുക്കാൻ തന്നീയ്ക്ക് എന്ന ചെയ്യാൻ പറ്റും എന്ന് എല്ലാവർക്കും സ്വയം ചിന്തി ചും നോക്കുക. ചില (ബോർഡ്)ക്കെല്ലയും ചെറിയ വിസിനുള്ളുകാരെയും സഹായിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കാം. പരക്കു എല്ലാം പണത്തിന് വേണ്ടിയപ്പേൾ അവർക്ക് വേണാൽ (പ്രമോഷൻ നൽകുന്നത് ഫീഡായിൽ) ആയിക്കൊടു. (പ്രമോട്ട് ചെയ്തുകൊണ്ട് ഹോസ്റ്റലിന്റെ പേരിലും നോക്കാൻ, ആ പ്രഖ്യാത് ചെയ്യുന്ന കാര്യത്തിൽ അധികാർഖിനിയും പിഡാ സം ഉദ്ഘാടനിരക്കാൻ. ഈ മുൻ സമയത്ത് നൽകാൻ കഴിയുന്ന നിങ്ങളെന്നതയും പിഡാനുന്നേയെല്ലാം കൂറിപ്പാണ്. എല്ലാവർക്കും സുക്ഷിരതായി ഇതിക്കുക. അനുഗ്രഹിതരായിയ്ക്കേടു ”എന്ന സ്നേഹികയുടെ ഇൻസ്റ്റഗ്രാം പോസ്റ്റ് ദോഹി ചരുക്കുന്നതു തന്മനയും കേരു കൂടാവുത്തൊള്ളായി എത്തുന്ന സേട്ടിക്കർ എന്ന ചിത്രത്തിലെണ്ണ് ഭൂമിക്ക് ഇരുമ്പും അഭിനവത്തിലുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നത്



**ശ്രദ്ധേയമായി ആർട്ടിസ്റ്റ്**

സാനിക്കുമ്പോൾ രണ്ടാം ഏപ്രിൽ  
സോഡ് തൃപ്പൻ പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നത്  
മുഴുവൻ മലയാളിക്കെല്ലാ സ്വരം  
നാട്ടുപോലെ പറഞ്ഞു കേൾക്കുന്ന  
മണാലിയാണ്. മലയാള ചലച്ചിത്ര  
ലോകത്തെ നിരവധിപേര് ചേർന്നു  
ണ് സാന്ദര്ഭവാഹിലൂലായിരുന്നു  
അശ്ര കോർത്തിണക്കിയിരുന്നു എ  
പ്പിസോഡ് പ്രേക്ഷകരിലേക്കെത്തി  
ചുത്ത്.

ബൈഹാബ് സി. വടക്കേവിട്, സംഗ  
സാനി എന്നിവർ ചേർന്ന് നിർബന്ധി  
പിക്കുന്ന യാത്രാവിവരങ്ങളിൽക്കൂടുതു  
സംഗ്രഹിതം സുമേഷ് സൗമംസുന്ദർ  
ആണ്. വിലകൾ എഴുന്നിയിരിക്കു  
ന്നത് സേരുന്ന കുറുക്ക് റിയാസ് വീ  
ഹമ്മദ് അശുശ്ര ഘുബ്രിയീറ് നിർവ്വഹി  
ചീതിക്കുന്നത്. ചരായാഗ്രഹണം- റാ  
ഹൂൽ കൊർ. ദേഖാണ്ട്- സർക്കാർ  
യാസ്. വിവരങ്ങൾ- ഷഡനിർ ബാം  
ബാം. വാർത്ത പ്രചരണം- പി.എം.  
പ്രസാദ്.





## NICK JONAS SAYS HE CRACKED RIB IN BIKING ACCIDENT, 'FEELING OK'

Los Angeles

Singer-actor Nick Jonas has revealed he cracked a rib over the weekend in a biking accident and is "doing all right".

According to a TMZ report, Jonas was injured late Saturday night and was hospitalised briefly.

The 28-year-old singer, who has been serving as a coach on "The Voice" for two non-consecutive seasons, reportedly injured himself while on the sets of the NBC singing competition series. Jonas gave a health update to the viewers on the Monday episode of the show.

"I'm feeling okay. I've been better, but I'm doing all right. (I have a) cracked rib from a spill on a bike, and a few other bumps and bruises," he said. "I just want to go ahead and say that, in case I'm not as physically enthusiastic as I usually am," he added. The panel for the ongoing 20th season of "The Voice" also features Blake Shelton, Kelly Clarkson, and John Legend.



## WAS INITIALLY INSECURE ABOUT WORKING ON 'THE LAST HOUR': SHAYLEE KRISHEN

New Delhi

Upcoming actor Shaylee Krishen says she was initially insecure about playing an intense character in the Amazon Prime Video series "The Last Hour".

The Kashmir-born artiste says she initially wanted to debut with a role similar to what Kareena Kapoor Khan played in the 2001 hit "Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham" but she gradually realised that her character in the series was more challenging. "I feel really blessed because to get this kind of character is very difficult so early in my career. Normally for a young girl, love stories are the usual standard for a debut."

"But, here I was playing a very intense character. So at first I was obviously very insecure. I thought I'm not getting to flip my hair like Poo in 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham,'" Krishen told PTI in a Zoom interview.

Billed as Amazon Prime Video's first supernatural crime series, "The Last Hour" explores the story of Dev, a shaman (healer), played by Karma Takapa, who joins a newly transferred cop DCP Arun Singh (Sanjay Kapoor) to track down a mysterious killer.

Set in a small Himalayan town, the series is created, written and produced by Kumar and Anupama Minz. Oscar-winning filmmaker Asif Kapadia has served as an executive producer on the show. Krishen, 23, plays Pari, a young woman and daughter to Kapoor's character, whom she describes as the "soul" of the show.

There were many people, including her family members, who were sceptical about starring in "The Last Hour", she recalled.

"Someone said this should have been your third-fourth project when you're established. So, I thought if I'm getting something which people are expecting to be my third or fourth project, why shouldn't I go ahead with it?" The young actor is all praise for Kumar, known for the 2013 film "Monsoon Shootout", and Minz.

"Amit sir knows what he wants. He actually took the actors which had some similarities with our characters," she said.

And Minz is the "backbone of this series".

"Anupama ma'am was supposed to join us also on the sets but she couldn't. She's fabulous. We're looking forward to her being on set for season two and see how women will drive our show also," Krishen teased. The actor was earlier supposed to make her debut with veteran cinematographer Santosh Sivan's bilingual film "Moha", but the coronavirus pandemic affected the release of the movie in theatres. "Moha", also directed by Sivan, is touted to be India's first Virtual Reality (VR) film, which is an Indo-American production.

"Moha" is going to be released in June. It was supposed to release this month but now the theatres are shut. It is a beautiful periodic film where I play a role of a warrior princess. "Krishen will also be seen in two Malayalam films with National Award-winning directors, including "Jack N Jill". "There is so much stress now because everything is going to come out together," she said.

Also starring Raima Sen, Robin Tamang and Mandakini Goswami, "The Last Hour" is currently streaming on Amazon Prime Video. (PTI)



## Rising fertiliser price worrying farmers

Aurangabad

Farmers in the State, especially Aurangabad district, have raised concern over the rising prices of fertilisers amid the grim Covid-19 situation and sought help from the Government ahead of the upcoming sowing season.

State Agriculture Minister Dada Bhuse told PTI that they had written to the central government to reduce the prices of fertilisers.

Notably, the Centre recently said it was considering subsidies to offset rise in global prices of raw materials of phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilisers in a bid to ensure their availability to farmers at subsidised rates across the country.

The government said it was taking all necessary steps to safeguard the interests of farmers during the Covid-19 crisis.

Farmer Deepak Joshi from Devgaon in Paithan

said the rising prices of fertilisers had upset his farming budget.

His crop yield last year got sold at lower prices than normal as there were no buyers due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown.

"Government agencies suggest use of fertilisers while sowing seeds. Not only fertilisers, but the cost of every activity has gone up due to fuel price hike. Earlier, two bags of fertilisers used to cost around Rs 1,100 each. Now, each bag

costs around Rs 1,925," he said.

Farmer Ishwar Sapkal from Soyegaon town also expressed similar woes.

"To cultivate jowar for a yield of 100 kg of grains, we need 25 kg fertiliser which costs Rs 1,000 now. Last time, I got Rs 1,000 per quintal for my jowar crop. So there was no profit at all," he said.

Sapkal has 40 acres and this year he has taken up cultivation of turmeric, ginger and cotton which need less amount of fertilisers as compared to other crops.

Kalidas Apet, working president of the pro-farmer outfit Shetkari Sanghatna, said the increase in rates of fertilisers was justified only if farmers got the right price for their produce.

Local agriculture expert Vijayanna Borade said the current second wave of Covid-19 coupled with the fuel price hike and rising prices of fertilisers was a big cause of worry for farmers.

"The government gave Rs 2,000 each to farmers through the Kisan Samman Yojana, but it has got neutralised with the fertiliser price hike. The kharif season yield this year may go down and cause shortage of food grains," Borade claimed. (PTI)



## JACKIE SHROFF'S MAKEUP ARTIST SHASHI SATAM DIES

Mumbai

Jackie Shroff's makeup artist Shashi Satam, who worked with the actor in movies "Hero", "Parinda" and "1942: A Love Story", passed away at a hospital here. He was in his 70s.

The actor's wife Ayesha Shroff said Satam was keeping unwell and last week he suffered a stroke. He breathed his last on Monday at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital. "He was pretty frail since before last year's lockdown. But he used to still sit on the set while his assistant did my husband's makeup. Last Wednesday he fell in his bathroom and had a stroke and passed away yesterday," Ayesha Shroff told PTI.

Jackie Shroff, 64, took to Twitter on Tuesday to mourn the demise of his make-up man of 37 years. "Shashi Dada Will always be in deepest corner of my heart. My make up person for 37 years passed away," he wrote. During his decades long career, Satam also worked on popular films like "Karz", "Teri Meherbaniyan", "Kaash", "Kyon Ki..." and "Hulchul". (PTI)



## Justin Hartley, Sofia Pernas tie knot

Los Angeles

Actors Justin Hartley and Sofia Pernas have tied the knot. According to People magazine, the couple got married "recently".

The "This Is Us" actor and his former "The Young and the Restless" co-star made their red carpet debut as a couple at the 2021 MTV Movie & TV Awards on Sunday.

They first sparked marriage rumours earlier this month after they were photographed wearing wedding bands on their hands while spending some quality time at the

beach in Malibu.

Hartley and Pernas, 31, started dating earlier last year and made their relationship social media official on the New Year's Eve. This is Hartley's third marriage. He was previously married to "Selling Sunset" actor Chrishell Stause for two years before he filed for divorce in November 2019. Their divorce was finalised in February.

Prior to Stause, Hartley, 44, was married to his "Passions" co-star Lindsay Korman from 2004 to 2012. They have daughter Isabella, 16.

## Amitabh Bachchan-funded Covid-19 facility starts ops

Mumbai

A Covid-19 care centre with 25-bed capacity and oxygen availability, helped set up by megastar Amitabh Bachchan, began its operations here on Tuesday, filmmaker Anand Pandit said. According to Pandit,

the Hindi cinema veteran provided the Juhu-based Ritambhara Vishva Vidyapeeth facility with necessary equipments and infrastructure.

"After a trial run, the centre was up and running by 10 am on Tuesday, May 18. Mr Bachchan has donated the equipment and infrastructure for the facility and all necessary permissions have been granted by the BMC," Pandit, who has collaborated with Bachchan on the thriller "Chehre", said in a statement.

In his blog post, dated May 16, Bachchan had said the 25 bed centre should be up and running by Tuesday taking into account the aftereffects of the Cyclone Tauktak.

Monday night, the screen icon informed that his office Janak in suburban Juhu was flooded after Cyclone Tauktak hit the city last night.

"There is an eerie silence in the midst of the Cyclone... Flooding in the vulnerable Janak Office, impromptu plastic cover sheets still in prep for the heavy Monsoon rain, ripped apart.. sheds and shelters for some staff blown away," he wrote. Bachchan said he shared his wardrobe with the staff whose uniforms were drenched as they repaired the office after the incessant rains.

"Staff simply amazing in such conditions .. their uniforms wet and dripping but they continue .. gave them dress changes urgently in this strife , from my own wardrobe and now they proudly move about as Chelsea and Jaipur Pink Panther supporters." (PTI)

## Kangana tests Covid negative

Mumbai

Actor Kangana Ranaut on Tuesday said she tested negative for Covid-19, more than 10 days after contracting the virus.

The 34-year-old actor had tested positive for the novel coronavirus on May 8 and was under home quarantine.

Ranaut, whose Twitter account was permanently suspended for repeated violations of rules earlier this month, took to Instagram to share the health update with her fans.

"Hello everyone today I tested

negative for Covid...Thanks for your wishes and love," she posted on her Instagram Stories.

On Monday, Mumbai reported 1,240 new Covid-19 cases and 48 more deaths, taking the tally of coronavirus infection to 6,89,936, while the death toll increased to 14,308, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said. (PTI)

## Colour-blind casting is the future: Huma Qureshi on Hollywood, 'Army of the Dead'

KOMAL PANCHAMIA

Mumbai

Colour-blind casting is the way forward in international cinema, says actor Huma Qureshi, who is making her Hollywood debut with Zack Snyder's upcoming zombie heist thriller "Army of the Dead". Qureshi is happy about the increasing global interest in India, its stories, and actors.

"There is a lot of conversation about colour-blind casting and that is the future. I feel the volatile world we all live in, it is important that we have the correct representation of all sorts of people. There is a big conversation in America also about representation and diversity in casting. I absolutely believe it is good for society and people. Globally, it is good for us because when young boys and girls see themselves, no matter which part of the world they are from, represented onscreen in a positive way, it enables them and affects their lives positively," the actor told PTI in a Zoom interview.

The movie may mark her foray into Hollywood but it is not Qureshi's first international project as the "Gangs of Wasseypur" star has previ-

ously worked with reputed directors like Gurinder Chadha and Deepa Mehta in "Viceroy's House" and "Leila", respectively.

"There is a lot of interest globally about India, Indian stories, folklore, films and talent. It is nice to be part of this. I am lucky to work with good directors like Gurinder Chadha, Deepa Mehta and now Zack Snyder. My journey or my quest is to work with different directors, stories and landscapes and I am exploring that." In "Army of the Dead", the 34-year-old actor plays Geeta, a refugee single mother living outside of Las Vegas, which has been closed off due to a zombie breakout. Geeta is a go-getter, who decides to venture into the containment zone to earn enough to get her children out of the camp.

The zombie heist movie is fronted by Hollywood star Dave Bautista, who with a group of mercenaries takes the ultimate gamble of venturing into a zombie outbreak zone in Las Vegas to pull off the greatest heist ever attempted. Qureshi, who came on board for the film in 2019, said when "Army of the Dead" was offered to her, she

was aware that it is a big ensemble film.

"It is Dave's story and we all have our own moments to shine. For me, it is not about the length of the role. It's always about what my character is bringing to the table. How my character is affecting the story, what I am doing in the film and how my character is taking the story forward," she said.

The actor said she relied on Snyder's story for the most part of her character, who she believes is a survivor.

"My interpretation of it was like, whenever a natural calamity happens like zombie outrage or pandemic there are groups of people who get trapped or are the most affected. This was a refugee character and how she gets trapped in a situation.

"However, she wants to survive, she is a survivor, wants to come out, and wants to change the circumstances. And decides to take destiny in her hands." Qureshi said it was a treat to work with Snyder, one of the most influential contemporary filmmakers in Hollywood known for spectacle films like "300", "Man of Steel" and "Justice League".

"He's always so nice and kind to his crew, cast. He will let you do your own thing. For this film, he was shooting it with a camera. I have never worked with a director who is also a director of photography."

"I remember meeting him for the first time and he was holding a camera on his shoulder and was running around. It is an incredible amount of passion this man brings to the table. It has been a very special experience of my life."

The actor said she is looking forward to the film's release on Netflix on May 21. The movie was also released in select theatres in the US on May 14.

"I can't wait to watch the film and show it to my parents, family and friends. I am very excited," she added. "Army of the Dead" cast also features Ella Purcell, Ana de la Reguera, Garret Dillahunt, Raul Castillo, Omari Hardwick, Hiroyuki Sanada, Tig Notaro and Matthias Schweighofer. (PTI)

